

## **SECTION VIII**

# **ENHANCING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN NURSING HOME LIFE**

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In order to achieve quality nursing home care for all nursing home residents, a total community approach must be used. Although nursing home owners/administrators have specific and major responsibilities to ensure the highest level of care and daily living for residents, the community can provide even more. Involvement of the community in the nursing home can enhance the care received and contribute to a greater quality of life for the residents of the facility.

The practice of caring for the aged in group settings has developed and grown in such a way that generally excludes the community at large. The lack of involvement in the past could be partially due to the fact that often citizens and community groups have not been made aware of issues/needs, and have lacked leadership and vehicles for constructive action.

However, the Nursing Home Community Advisory Committees are excellent vehicles and now have the opportunity and responsibility to:

1. educate the community about needs,
2. motivate citizens to care and act, and
3. give guidance and opportunities for involvement.

Here are some examples of specific ways the NHCAC's can fulfill these responsibilities:

### **1. Mobilize Volunteer Visitors for Facilities.**

**A. Person to Person.** It is often said that there is no better recruiter than a well-satisfied volunteer. The enthusiasm of a NHCAC member about the program can be transmitted to others and can be the most effective form of recruitment.

**B. Media.** Potential volunteers can be reached through intelligent use of the media. Public service announcements on radio and television; and publicity about the need for volunteers through newspaper articles, radio or television talk shows, ect. can also help a group tell its story to the community.

**C. Present Programs:** Contact women's groups, schools, church groups, youth groups and civic organizations and tell them you are available to present a

program on how visitors of any age can alleviate the loneliness and isolation of nursing home residents. For this program a film, such as “Because Somebody Cares,” could be used. Prepare a handout including such information as how to visit and build rapport with the elderly; description of levels of care; names of facilities along with the number of each type of bed used in the facility; names of residents whom volunteers can personally deliver cards to on their individual birthdays.

When bringing the community into the nursing home, **PLAN** well, down to the smallest detail. **COMMUNICATE** with facility personnel because you will need their cooperation (including the administrator). Also, be sure to **TRACK** development of the event, **COMMUNICATING** all the way. You will avoid unwelcome “surprises” by coordinating your efforts with the nursing home administrator and staff, thereby not disappointing the volunteers and residents or jeopardizing your credibility.